

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Governor, School Mascots Kickoff *Read Kansas Read* Summer Reading Program

Topeka – Big Jay, Willie the Wildcat and Gus the Gorilla joined Kansas Governor Sam Brownback at the Topeka/Shawnee County Public Library today to kick off *Read Kansas Read*. The statewide summer reading program is a collaborative effort by the Governor's Office and the Kansas State Department of Education to challenge Kansas children to read while they aren't in school.

"For most of the calendar year, teachers are in the classroom working hard to develop students' literacy skills," Governor Brownback said. "During the summer, however, too many children lack educational experiences, like reading, to continue that development uninterrupted. *Read Kansas Read* is designed to be a fun way to help children bridge the gap between classroom learning in the spring and the fall."

The Kansas State Librarian Jo Budler, Kansas Commissioner of Education Dr. Diane DeBacker and literacy expert Dr. Malbert Smith also joined the Governor at the announcement.

"Reading is fundamental to success in school and life," Dr. DeBacker said. "Reading during the summer not only helps to keep students on track academically, it is also fun. The Kansas State Department of Education is pleased to partner with Governor Brownback on the summer reading program."

In August, the top two summer readers from each of the 10 Kansas State Department of Education districts and their families will join the Governor and First Lady for a special picnic celebration catered by Freddy's Frozen Custard & Steakburgers at Cedar Crest, the Governor's Mansion, in Topeka. Special guests and mascots from Kansas universities and colleges also will attend the celebration.

"Librarians are pleased to join Gov. Brownback in encouraging our youngest residents to read during their summer break," Budler said. "We know this prevents the infamous "summer slide" from grade level to below grade level."

Dr. Smith thanked Governor Brownback and Commissioner DeBacker for marshaling and coordinating a statewide effort to promote literacy.

“With this collaborative state effort today, Kansas is taking a leading effort in our nation in addressing one of the real challenges in eliminating the achievement gap,” Dr. Smith said.

Kids interested in participating can sign up at the local library or download their own book tracking form from the program’s website, www.ReadKansasRead.ks.gov. All participating libraries and individuals must complete and return their form by August 1st.

“I want to challenge every Kansas student to read as many books as they can this summer. I plan to read at least four,” Brownback said.

Brownback said promoting summer reading is a real collaborative effort. Radio and television station members of the Kansas Association of Broadcasters will air PSAs featuring reading challenges from the Governor, First Lady Brownback and other well-known Kansans like KSU Football Coach Bill Snyder, KU Men’s Basketball Coach Bill Self and WSU Baseball Coach Gene Stephenson. The State Library will use its library network to encourage local library participation.

Sponsors of the summer reading program include Freddy’s Frozen Custard & Steakburgers, Kansas Association of Broadcasters, Kansas Board of Regents, Kansas Book Festival, Kansas State Library, Kansas State Department of Education, Kansas State University, MetaMetrics, Inc., Pittsburg State University, University of Kansas, and Wichita State University.

For more information, visit www.ReadKansasRead.ks.gov.